

Springfield, PA — Today, Congressman Joe Sestak attended the dedication of a Blue Star Memorial Garden at Veteran's Memorial Park in Springfield.

"I am honored to be at this dedication of this special garden, which recognizes the sacrifices of the brave men and women who have served our country," stated Congressman Sestak.

The Blue Star Memorial Program of the National Garden Clubs, Inc. started to honor the men and women serving in the Armed Forces during World War II. It began in 1944 with the planting of 8,000 Dogwood trees by the New Jersey Council of Garden Clubs as a living memorial to veterans of World War II. The name was chosen for the star on flags displayed in homes and businesses denoting a family member serving. Garden clubs pictured a ribbon of living memorial plantings traversing every state. It grew into the Blue Star Memorial Marker program where a uniform marker was designed to identify the Highways.

Today, the Blue Star Memorial Program extends thousands of miles across continental U.S., Alaska, and Hawaii. And the program was expanded to include all men and women who had served, were serving or would serve in the armed services of the United States.

"As we remember those who have fallen, we must continue to stand up for those who are still fighting overseas and those who have finished their service with honor," added Congressman Sestak.

Since he has been in Congress, Congressman Sestak has been fighting for the men and women who have served and who are currently serving in our armed forces. He successfully passed two amendments to H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act, which will improve mental health care for our wounded soldiers. The first amendment highlights the fact that mental health care is an essential component to the medical services offered to our Veterans and the members of our Armed Services by clarifying that 'medical care' as defined in H.R. 1538 includes mental health care services. The second amendment requires the Secretary of the Department of Defense to develop a plan to help prevent Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and other stress-related psychopathologies (including substance abuse conditions) from developing in our military service members. In addition, it requires the Secretary to submit to Congress within 180 days a plan for establishing a Peer-Reviewed research program within the Defense Health Program's research and development function to research the prevention of

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and how to best strengthen the psychological resiliency of our military service members. Both amendments passed with unanimous support.

*Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever to serve in the U.S. Congress.*

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